



SHORT STORIES

OF LOVE AND ADVENTURE



The Macintosh Red

By Joella Johnson

O H, no, Jim's worrying didn't trouble me especially. I'd let him worry, and then I'd cheer him up. "Suppose butter had gone down to twenty-nine cents," I'd say, "eggs may go up to fifty cents tomorrow. Smiles, Jim, smiles!"

Now, the first time I talked like that I supposed Jim would smile if only to please his bride, but there he sat, staring at his butter check, glummer than ever. But I soon found out he liked the nonsensical things I said, though he never took the trouble to show it.

I never saw a harder working man than Jim. He and Ned Blake bought two of the best farms in town before they were 25 and started out to see which could pay off the mortgage first. But somehow or other, as the years rolled on Ned kept \$100 or so ahead with his payments. It was sort of exasperating, for Jim always had his mind on the mortgage, and to hear

Ned's great rollicking laugh you'd think he never had a care in the world. I said Jim was the hardest working man I knew. I suppose Ned really worked as hard, though he never made so many motions doing it.

Living with a worrying man grew to be as exciting as a game. I found so many little ways of helping Jim. When a small bill came in that he couldn't pay just then I learned to lay it aside until I'd sold my eggs. Then, with his bill in one hand and my check in the other, he couldn't find much to say. But there were times when Jim got ahead of me. He saw the mail first the day he received the highest tax bill we ever had. That evening you'd have thought he was reading the obituaries of all his relatives instead of the daily. "Jim," says I, looking up from the little coat I was mending, "why don't you go to bed?" "I can't go to sleep if I do," groaned Jim. "We never can pay

those taxes without borrowing money." "Well," says I, "go to bed and perhaps you will dream of a good place to borrow some." Pretty soon Jim threw down the paper for me to pick up and started off. Five minutes later I tip-toed into the bedroom and there he was sleeping like a child. I suppose 'twasn't much fun worrying with no one looking on.

I'd never seen Jim so light-hearted as he was the year we had the banner apple crop. Next to Johnnie and me, Jim loved his orchard, and the pride of his heart that year was the big Mackintosh red that stood by the roadside. I tried to make Jim pick off some of the apples, but he said we needed all the money we could get and propped up the branches until the tree looked like a centipede.

Try as I would I couldn't get that tree off my mind one day when Jim went to town for grain. Half a dozen

a big helping of squash, and I told him, "Well, it's too bad," says Jim, without a quiver, "spoils the looks of the tree—killed it, maybe—but there's more coming on. Say, Martha, Ned paid off the last cent of his mortgage today, and he looks sick."

"Sick!" was all I could say in a kind of whisper, but Jim didn't know whether I'd answered or not.

"Ned drove home right ahead of me," he went on, "and I noticed he didn't act natural—never turned 'round to talk and joke, as usual, and I thought maybe he was sick. When I couldn't stand it no longer I hollered and asked him what the matter was. Then he turned quick enough and talked right out."

"Jim, this is the most miserable day I've spent since I bought my farm," says he. "I told you down to the store that I'd paid off the mortgage, and I have. Jim, I've been the happiest man alive making a payment every year, keeping up the interest and supporting my family on what was left. It was just like a game and I'm plumb lost without it. Of course, I can spend more than I can make on farm machinery, but that ain't like a mortgage to keep you hustling and happy."

Then Jim looked into my eyes and sort of smiled. "Tell you what, Martha," he says. "We're only \$150 left on our mortgage and we're not so terribly old. Guess you'd better not worry any more about that Mackintosh red. Didn't happen to make apple dumplings for dessert, did you?"

Behind All Around.

Exasperated Passenger (after long delay at wayside station)—Why don't you keep better time on this wretched line!

Irish Guard (confidentially)—Well, now, ma'am, I'll explain it all to ye. The train before is behind, and his train was behind before besides.

Uncomfortably Warm.

"It is said that paper can be used effectively in keeping a person warm." That's true. I remember a thirty-day note of mine once kept me in a sweat for a month.

J. C. FLEMING & CO. have cut the prices again. What! Again! Jack Below jumped out of his chair and took an angry turn through the office. "They must be mad!"

"It's the new manager; he's trying a new stunt."

"Damn fool that's what he is. Why, Joe, they'll bankrupt us if this keeps up. We can't sell at such prices."

"Guess that's what he's after—to have one competitor less," grunted Joseph Gray gloomily.

"Call Miss Small. I'm going to write them another letter. This thing has got to stop. Why, man alive, they'll ruin their own business, too. Oh, Miss Small: Fleming & Co., city. Gentlemen—Referring to your recent reduction in the prices of Japanese lilies and Holland tulips, we wish to say that you are deliberately ruining the entire bulb trade. There is absolutely no profit left if we are to compete with such price-cutting. Your new man-

ager may be an energetic, live wire man, but he has no brains when it comes to the bulb business, etc.

Three days later Joe came in. "Hear from Fleming & Co? I can't land an order at our prices—every florist is ordering from Fleming & Co." He sank dejectedly into a chair.

Jack's face looked like a thundercloud. "Yes, I got an answer today. They wish to inform me that their new manager is contemplating another cut."

"I'd like to wring his neck," was all Joe commented.

"That's nothing to what I'd do to him. Look here," pointing to a trade journal, "here it says Fleming & Co.'s new manager is off for a vacation at the new Hot Springs Hotel and we're watching our business go to smash."

"Jack!" Joe's voice foretold an inspiration, "you've got to go to that Hot Springs hotel and scrape an acquaintance with that fellow and talk to him. Now listen. We've finished

trying to bulldoze him; we've got to use other tactics. First of all, apologize for your letters. Have a heart-to-heart talk with him, persuade him, see? You simply got to, Jack; it's our only chance; and for heavens sake get another face! Nobody will speak to you if you look that sour."

Jack went very reluctantly, Joe in the city waited for reports, at first, very patiently, and then, as only picture postcards came with "having fine time, best wishes, Jack," he began to fidget.

After two weeks of such correspondence Joe was as mad as a hornet. He had not sent his partner down to Hot Springs for his health, and he was going after him and bring him back.

Jack, beaming, was at the station to meet him.

"Joe, old chap," he said, and wrung his hand as though he had not seen him in a year or more. "I'm bursting with news. I know I only wrote postals, but you'll forgive me when you hear all about it." Joe picked up his ears.

"Joe," his voice quivered, "I've met the most wonderful girl. Listen, I fell in love the first day I came here. Joe, I did not know such a girl existed, the most wonderful—"

"By golly, my patience is at an end! What about our business—what did you come down here for, anyway—to fall in love!" Joe actually roared.

"O, stop yelling, I didn't have time

to find that manager, but see here, how to tell her, "You see, Miss Ryers, I sent him down here to find Fleming & Co.'s manager and—"

"O," interrupted Daisy joyously, "here comes Jack!" and ran a few steps to meet him. "I've been talking to your chum, Mr. Gray, Jack, and he's just telling me that you came down here to find Fleming & Co.'s manager, and isn't it nice he found the manager, Mr. Gray?"

"But he didn't," said Joe quickly.

"O, yes he did," contradicted pretty Daisy, smiling. "Only Jack doesn't know it, either. I'm the manager of Fleming & Co."

Jack simply stared, dumfounded. But Joe burst out:

"What? you a girl. By golly, we never thought of that!"

"And as for all the silly price cutting, Jack and I will talk it over. I'm rather tired of managing, and maybe we might merge the two companies. What do you think, Jack?" asked Daisy softly.

"We never thought of that either," mumbled Joe to himself as he discreetly left them alone.

He Was Pushed to It.

On January 3, 5, 6, 1926, I gave notice to the public that I, Fred Traut, would not be responsible for any debts contracted by my wife, Julia Traut, which was a mistake, as I was pushed to doing same. I am glad to say we are together again.—Fred Traut.

A Cut-Price Proposal

By Phil Moore

That Strange Animal

By Algia Frances Brooks.

D OWN the country road, as fast as the little fat legs could carry him, the yellow curls blowing in the winter breeze, the blue eyes saucer-size with mysterious knowledge, bounded little Tony. When he was within a few yards of a pretty white cottage, a tall, blue-gowned woman appeared at the door.

"Why are you running this cold day?" she asked.

Tony stopped, panting for breath. "Er—where's Dick?" he asked at last. Dick was his little chum next door.

"I should think you ought to know," answered the woman. "I am going to have company this afternoon, and I don't want you two to get into mis-

sie making raspberry tarts this morning."

"Humph," grunted Tony, contemptuously. "You're meant for a girl, I guess. We won't lose our supper if we're careful—anyhow, we can eat more breakfast in the morning."

"Well, I'll get the hat," interrupted Dick, as he turned in at the gate.

An hour later a tall, blue-gowned woman was serving lemonade to the members of the Ladies' Aid.

"It was the strangest creature," the demure lady was saying.

"Oh, tell us about it," smiled the fat lady with the pompadour.

"Well," continued the first speaker, "Hope read it in her new book. You see, she's been interested in some new 'ology' and she's been reading all about it. This was a new animal just discovered in India. It was very interesting, with a high, flat back, a very tiny tail, and almost no perceptible head. It—"

"Mercy!" cried the postmaster's little wife in the bombazine dress, looking out the window. "What's that in the road?"

All eyes turned towards the road, and the strange animal was forgotten.

"Why, Mrs. Dolan!" exclaimed the hostess, "It looks like a bundle someone has dropped. And did that animal really have no head?" she asked, turning to the demure lady.

brave, settled back in their chairs as the tall, blue-gowned woman started toward the road.

Mrs. Dolan still gazed at the road. Her eyes grew big with wonder. "Do you suppose—it had a high flat back and no perceptible—"

Once again the demure lady was the center of attention.

"Why, perhaps—" began one shrill voice.

"It has a high, flat back—" ventured another.

By this time the ladies were so excited they rose as one person to go down toward the road. Their hostess had almost reached the jumping object. She had reached it! It jerked sideways—Mrs. Dolan caught her breath! Now the tall lady stooped and reached out her hand.

"How does she dare to touch it," whispered one of the group.

Then the tall lady grasped the object, picked it up and held it aloft.

Mrs. Dolan sank to the ground; the rest of the group hurried to the road.

There they saw the tall lady with a knowing look on her face holding a tall silk hat in her hand and looking down at a huge toad.

"Well, of all—" squealed a member of the Ladies' Aid.

Behind the fence in the next yard crouched Tony and Dick.

"And those raspberry tarts will be all gone by tomorrow," sighed Dick.

"You were meant for a girl," said Tony in a voice of contempt.

The Penalty.

"How about that telephone girl who married for love?"

"The line's still busy."

"What do you mean?"

"She's doing the family washing."

On Trial.

"The officer says you used bad language."

"When he stopped me I was in a tantrum."

"Never mind the make of the car."

Accidental Exchange

By Elsie Endicott

L INCOLN street!" called the conductor, and Harvey Wilson, immersed in a morning paper editorial, had barely time to make a frantic gesture at the autocar of the trolley car, to snatch up his bundle of laundry from the seat beside him, and to make a hasty exit, thus avoiding being carried by his corner. On Lincoln street was Hop Sing's laundry, and Hop Sing was the best and cheapest laundryman Harvey knew. Stepping into the laundry, he delivered the bundle to the bland Hop Sing, received his half of the ticket, and hurried by a short cut to the main street where his office was situated.

The girls in the office were vastly interested in Harvey, but he did not return the compliment. Someway he didn't seem to care for girls. A pity, since his income was as attractive as his looks, which is saying a good deal.

A few days later, he again bent his steps in the direction of Hop Sing's establishment, this time homeward bound after the day's work, to get the clean shirts and collars which should now be ready for him.

The clerk smiled as he produced Harvey's bundle. The smile broadened as he untied the bundle and unrolled to Harvey's astounded gaze, a black "Dinah" rag doll, a "Kewpie" in a most insufficient suit, two teddy bears in indifferent repair, a train of cars, and a miscellaneous assortment of what he would have termed "doll duds!"

"Why," exploded Harvey. "I never brought that junk here! Where'd I get a bundle of rag dolls and teddy bears? What've you done with my shirts and collars?"

"That's your bundle," returned the clerk. "Look at the ticket."

Harvey looked. Apparently the facts were as stated. But where and how had he annexed that bundle? And where were his shirts?

Harvey left the laundry in a state of perspiration which seriously threatened to add another collar to his laundry.

Plainly, he must have exchanged his laundry bundle with somebody on the car, when he made his hasty exit. He vaguely recalled a young woman taking a seat next him, as the car filled, and putting down a bundle between them. He wished she had her old bundle! Hop Sing wouldn't keep it, and he meant to chuck it into the first dump-barrel he passed!

In the trolley, homeward bound, he opened his paper, glanced over the ads, to see how the one he had just inserted for an office boy looked, and stumbled upon this item, under "Information."

"WILL THE GENTLEMAN who accidentally exchanged a bundle of laundry, for a package of toys, last Tuesday a. m. on the 8:30 Forest avenue car call at No. 12 Bronson street, city, to make exchange?"

"R. J. SEWALL."

Would he? He quickly secured a transfer which landed him at the end of Bronson street and presently was confronting the prettiest girl he had ever seen, who had answered his ring at No. 12.

"I called," he began awkwardly, "about those rag dolls—"

"Oh, yes!" cried the girl. "Come right in. I know you'll be as glad to get your laundry as my little nephews and nieces will to get the toys their cousins sent them, and which you now have."

She was bringing out the other bundle as she spoke, and Harvey was noting how womanly and sweet she was, as well as pretty, and what a nice homey place No. 12 was.

"I—I feel as if I owed them something for disappointing them so," he said. "Couldn't I bring them over some—some candy next Sunday, to make up?"

"Oh, that would be lovely!" cried the girl. "They live at No. 44 Hope street—"

"Well—you see—I—I thought—I might—bring it here—" he stammered. "My name is Harvey Wilson, and—"

"I've known you by sight for some time, Mr. Wilson," said the girl, "but not your name. My cousin has just gone to work in your office, I believe. My name is Betty Sewall. The children—sometimes visit here Sunday. I'll bring the candy, then!" vowed Harvey.

The jury composed entirely of women had been brought back into the courtroom after 10 hours' deliberation. "And does the jury want instruction from me?" asked the Judge solemnly.

"No, your honor. What we want is a pack of cards suitable for a game of bridge," replied the forewoman.

The Quarrel

By Parke Whitney

T OM, said Helen, a four months' bride. "Betty's had another quarrel with Phil and gone to her mother's for a while. I'm glad we never quarrel, but then, we understand each other." But little she thought of the coming disaster.

"They're nothing but foolish children anyway," said Tom, as he rose from his chair. "Come, we've just time to get to the theater, and the conversation of their friends' quarrel was dropped."

The next day, as Tom came in for his noon-day meal, he found Helen

reading a letter. "Oh, Tom, dear, I've just had a letter from Jerry, and I'm going to write immediately back and have that dear child make us a visit." But before Tom could ask who Jerry was, his wife changed the subject to a delicious dish she had prepared for her Tom's dinner. If Tom had any misgivings about Helen and Jerry, they were soon forgotten when he found a wholesome dinner on the table, with its new linen and shining silver.

The thought of Jerry was dismissed from Tom's mind until two weeks later, when he let himself in by his latch

key, not getting any response from his four short rings, and found on the table a note. It read: "Have gone to meet Jerry. Will be back in time for tea. Dinner is on the table for you, Helen."

Beside the note was a letter, evidently forgotten by his wife. Would Tom dare to read it? Why not? Didn't Helen let him read all her letters? It only said that "Jerry was coming and for Helen to be waiting at the station." It was signed, "Your Dearest Jerry." Tom's dinner was forgotten. The small questions illumined before his

mind like a mountain. Who was Jerry? Did Helen love him? Where would they spend the afternoon? Tom had secured a half holiday as a surprise for Helen. No matter, he would take his planned-for trip alone.

He left a note on the table for his wife, took his line and hook and started for the wharf.

Just before tea Helen arrived home alone, as Jerry had been invited out for the evening and would be back later. But it was time for Tom to be home. Where was he? Helen found the note and hastily scanned its contents. "Will be back tonight. Have taken Elsie and gone fishing." It read: "Elsie! Who was she? Why, how could Tom do such a thing? Gone on a fishing trip with a girl she had never heard of. Scandalous! What would Jerry think? And only this afternoon I was telling how well we get along. Well, I only hope he gets home before Jerry." All this went through Helen's mind as she sat out the long evening waiting for Tom.

Ten o'clock came and with it tears, but no Tom. Half past ten, and then a key was heard in the door. Tom found

Helen on the couch with swollen eyes. "Well, dear," said Tom, with a light voice and a heavy heart. "Where's Jerry, or whatever his name is?"

"His? Why, Tom, you know Jerry Page. However did you misunderstand like that?"

Then the light broke before Tom's mind as Geraldine Page's face stood out among the rest of the college class that Helen and he were in. "Well, dear, I certainly was fooled; I had forgotten all about poor Jerry; but, then, I might have known that you—and, Helen you've been crying," as he noticed her wet face for the first time. You said a tr-r-r-r—Elsie, burst out Helen afresh.

"Well, dear, that's a case of forgetfulness on each side," said Tom, as he understood the situation at once. "Have you forgotten that Elsie is the name of Phil's motor boat? Come now, it with groceries."

All Over.

Hearing a crash of glassware one morning, Mrs. Blank called to her maid in the adjoining room, "Norah, what on earth are you doing?"

"I'm doin' nothin', mum," replied Norah; "it's done."

Love Tokens.

"Say it with flowers."

"Well?"

"A pretty thought, is it not?"

"Very. But after the honeymoon is over the sensible young man will say it with groceries."